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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: RUSSIA-GEORGIA SITUATION, U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN  
RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused August 30 - September 2 news coverage on the continued investigation into former President Chen Shui-bian's money laundering case; on Saturday's mass rally targeting President Ma Ying-jeou's first one hundred days in office; and on Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda's sudden resignation Wednesday. Taiwan's defense needs and planning also caught the local media's attention, including various sources debating on whether Taiwan has ever proposed the letter of request (LOR) to the United States regarding its plan to procure F-16 C/D fighter jets. In addition, the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" devoted its entire page four Monday to reporting on Taiwan's research and development of the indigenous Hsiung Feng IIE cruise missiles, the procurement of F-16 C/D fighter jets, and the Ma Ying-jeou Administration's allegedly poor defense planning.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an op-ed piece in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" discussed the war between Russia and Georgia and its implications for Taiwan. The article concluded that under the circumstances that Russia-Georgia conflict would launch a new Cold War in Eurasia, China seems to have acquired a major position among Russia, the United States and NATO, which will naturally put Taiwan in a very unfavorable position. With regard to the upcoming U.S. presidential elections, an editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" expressed hope that both the Republican and Democratic presidential candidates will pay more attention to the Taiwan issue and cross-Straits situation. A separate "Taipei Times" op-ed piece, written by Nat Bellocchi, former AIT Chairman and now a special adviser to the Liberty Times Group, asked if Taiwan is ready to engage the present in the wake of the Beijing Olympics. End summary.

### ¶3. Russia-Georgia Situation

"Russia-Georgia War Will Involve Taiwan in a Calamity"

Lai I-chung, an executive committee member at the Taiwan Thinktank, opined in a column in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 300,000] (8/31):

"... In light of the fact that Russia has been acting proactively and taking full advantage of Washington being trapped by Iraq and anti-terrorism and NATO and the Europeans taking inconsistent diplomatic approaches, the reactions of the United States and NATO have been very weak. But chances are slim that the United States and NATO will take no action at all. Even if they are unable to help Georgia to regain its 'territorial integrity,' both Washington and NATO, at the request of some former Eastern European countries [sic, presumably former East Bloc], will seek to strengthen their cooperative ties with these countries and expand their strategic restraining capabilities toward Russia in the Outer-Caucasus and the Black Sea. Such a development can be seen by Poland's rapid move in signing [an agreement to deploy] a battery of [American] missile interceptors in Poland and the United States' new expectations for Turkey.

"Strategic competition between the two sides will only intensify, since Russia deems these areas as its own domain of power, on which no other country is allowed to encroach, while both Washington and NATO are worried that, because of the Russia-Georgia war, Russia intends to challenge the order in Eurasia in the post-Cold War era. Under such circumstances, strategic competition turning white-hot is likely to trigger a new Cold War in Eurasia, even if Russia does not have the ideology of expansionism.

"Should a new Cold War occur in Eurasia, China will very likely acquire the central position, as in the Cold War era, of being able to alter the balance [of power] between the United States and Russia. For Washington, it may possibly adopt either of the following two ways to deal with its strategic competition with Russia in Europe: Namely, it will either resume its old way, as in the Cold War era, of joining hands with China to restrain Russia, or it will discuss with Russia the settlement each other's domain of power. The former approach will result in Taiwan's marginalization, while the latter will damage the United States' strategic reputation, as Washington will tacitly allow Russia to do whatever it wants with Georgia, and thereby weaken Washington's regional stabilizing capability via its alliance with Asia. No matter which way Washington adopts, China will be the biggest winner. ...

"Given that the war between Russia and Georgia will likely launch a new cold war in Eurasia, it appears that China has occupied a more favorable strategic position. Also, because the Olympic Games no longer pose any restrictions on China and the Beijing Olympics have added fuel to nationalism, there seems to be neither a need nor desire on China's part to act in concert with Taiwan. Should Taiwan respond to such a development by tilting more rapidly toward China in exchange for zero threats from Beijing, it will only push Taiwan more hastily away from the strategic track of the United States, RELATIONS

Japan and India and make the island become more isolated. As a result, crisis in the Taiwan Strait will only arrive earlier!"

#### 14. U.S.-China-Taiwan Relations

##### A) "Taiwan and the US Presidential Race"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (8/30):

"Cautious optimism is the appropriate response to the US Republican party sharpening its rhetoric in support of Taiwan as part of its presidential campaign. For Taiwanese who watch US politics, optimism is a precious and fleeting commodity. Not so long ago, it was sensible to assume that the US military intervention in Iraq - and to a lesser extent Afghanistan - would become so repulsive for voting Americans that the proposal to support a small country such as Taiwan against the designs of the Chinese juggernaut in the event of conflict would be laughable.

Adding to the gloom for pro-democracy Taiwanese was the swift retreat by US President George W. Bush, whose early, provocative comments supporting Taiwan gave way to the unenlightened China appeasement that defines the modus vivendi of the Department of State and much of US academia. ...

"When China irritates people and governments, Taiwan gains. This is because the threat that Taiwan faces turns into a thing that others can appreciate - if only for a moment - in practical terms. Now, by upping the ante on the political currency of cross-strait conflict, the camp of the Republicans' presumptive candidate, Senator John McCain, is asking Americans to think carefully about what China is and what it could do, and why Taiwan is inseparable from this issue. The message is abrupt and not without risk, but it is safe to say that the Democrats will respond not by defending China but plugging presidential candidate Obama's credentials to defend US interests should China become too obnoxious. ...

"Either way, Taiwan and China are developing into a potential wedge issue for the Democrats. For Taiwan, this is not necessarily a good thing because the issue is not crucial to the vote, and because the tenor and content of the debate is completely outside Taiwan's control. And even if Taipei could do something to tilt public sentiment in the US, it is unlikely that President Ma Ying-jeou's

administration would have the intelligence and ability to seize the initiative. In his acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention on Thursday, Obama warned that the US must learn to face the threats of the future and not be distracted by the mistakes of the past. Obama's 'threats' tend not to be states but extremism, environmental concerns and economic vulnerabilities, yet all of these concerns have a Chinese link. With luck, the Republicans' move to turn this into a point of debate will allow more truths about China, Taiwan and their stateside supporters to be aired before the next president takes his post.'

B) "Is Taiwan Prepared to Engage the Present?"

Nat Bellocchi, former AIT chairman and now a special adviser to the Liberty Times Group, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" (8/31):

"... Ma supports having Taiwan's allies enter into economic and cultural relations with China and he will seek participation in 16 UN agencies. Many see these and other issues - suggesting a comprehensive economic cooperation agreement with China similar to Hong Kong's; seeking UN observer status; and suggesting name flexibility - as undermining Taiwan's sovereignty. ... While all this might be a concern for Beijing, Taiwan will be busy trying to move closer to China.

"At the same time, Taiwan is trying to rekindle US interest. That is difficult with the US focused on the election race, which will produce a new government in about five months. Its relations with a growing China will be more difficult than before. Its problems in the Middle East will not end, while recent tensions with Russia over Georgia are causing it more headaches. This is a time to go over what has been going on. Issues both at home and abroad are changing. Are we ready?"

WANG